

Assassination Probers Rated High in Stature

By James E. Clayton
Staff Reporter

Rarely, if ever, in American history has an investigating commission with such impressive credentials been established as the one President Johnson created last night to look into the circumstances of President Kennedy's assassination.

In fact, precedents for such a commission are few and those for the participation of the Chief Justice perhaps nonexistent.

The only presidential commission of this type established in recent years was one created by President Roosevelt in 1941 to investigate the disaster at Pearl Harbor. It was headed by Justice Owen J. Roberts with four military officers as its other members.

The participation of Justice Roberts brought complaints from Chief Justice Harlan Fiske Stone that members of the Supreme Court should not be tabbed for non-judicial duties.

Similar Group in 1876

A somewhat similar commission was established, although by an Act of Congress, after the election of 1876 ended in a dispute over the votes of three Southern states. Five Justices of the Supreme Court, as well as five Senators and five Representatives, served on that body although Chief Justice Morrison R. Waite refused to serve.

There have been other commissions down through the years—the Hoover Commission on governmental reorganization, a commission to look into the prohibition laws, and so on—but most of these were named to study problems and propose solutions.

In selecting the seven members of this Commission, it seems clear that President Johnson was seeking men from all branches of Government who are held in great respect by their colleagues.

gress selected by the President clearly represent a cross-section of political views. Sen. Russell is the spokesman for the conservative Southerners. Sen. John Sherman Cooper (R-Ky.) is highly regarded by liberals in both parties. Rep. Boggs, the House whip, is a moderate Southerner who represents the leadership in both houses. Rep. Gerald Ford (R-Mich.) is leader of the "Young Turks," the activist wing of the Republican Party in the House.

The Chief Justice, of course, has been sharply attacked by the radical right, personified in the John Birch Society, but pairing them with men like Russell has reduced the possibility of similar sniping at the Commission.

In thumbnail sketch, the careers of the seven men are:

- Warren, 72, has been Chief Justice since 1953. Prior to that, he was Governor of California, and the Republican candidate for Vice President in 1948. He also served many years as Attorney General of California and as the prosecutor for Alameda County.

- Russell, 66, is the second senior member of the Senate where he has served since 1933. He headed the Senate Armed Services Committee in 1951 when it investigated the dispute that led to the removal of Gen. Douglas MacArthur as commander of American forces in the Far East.

In addition, the two non-governmental members have had extensive experience in intelligence and investigative work. All seven men are lawyers.

Four from Congress

There are only two Democrats among the seven—Sen. Richard B. Russell of Georgia and Rep. Hale Boggs of Louisiana. But the two non-governmental members, Allen W. Dulles and John J. McCloy, are Republicans, who have held high posts in Democratic as well as Republican Administrations.

The four members of Con-

- Cooper, 62, was a State court judge in Kentucky before he entered the national political arena in 1948. He was Ambassador to India between short terms in the Senate and was the liberal candidate against Sen. Everett M. Dirksen for the minority leadership post in the Senate in 1958.

- Boggs, 49, has been in Congress since 1947. He was considered by many as the heir apparent to the Speakership when Sam Rayburn died. He was defeated for that post by John W. McCormack of Massachusetts but now serves as the No. 2 Democrat in the House.

- Ford, 50, was first elected to Congress in 1948. Last winter he was elected chairman of the Republican Party Conference in the House as the candidate of the young members. He has been cited by the American Political Science Association as one of the most effective Congressmen.

- Dulles, 70, was director of the Central Intelligence Agency for eight years before his retirement in 1961. He had previously been a high official in the Office of Strategic Services during World War II. In 1961, he was a member of the three-man board of inquiry set up by President Kennedy to look into the Bay of Pigs debacle.

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- McCloy, 68, chairman of the Board of Chase Manhattan Bank in New York, was High Commissioner in Germany after World War II. More recently, he was named by President Kennedy as disarmament coordinator and as head of a special team that negotiated with the Russians during the Cuban crisis. McCloy first made an imprint as an investigator before America's entry into World War I, when he was an attorney in the cases arising from the Black Tom explosions in New Jersey—a series of industrial explosions.

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